

Suore di Sant'Anna

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The Provincial Superior

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"... and behold, the Lord passed by: but the Lord was not in the wind; the Lord was not in the earthquake, the Lord was not in the fire... after the fire, a sound of sheer silence". (1 Kings 19:11-13).

Dearest Sisters,

The Lord is the 'God who passes by' as it was for the prophet Elijah, for whom God passed by in 'the rustling of a gentle silence'. Like Elijah, who was on the mountain in prayer, when the Lord came, so also for Sr. Alfonsina. He reveals Himself as the lover and saviour of humanity. Nothing is said of what happened between the prophet and his Lord at the mysterious moment of revelation. God's presence in our life, in fact, is a discrete presence, just as discrete, silent and almost hidden was the life of Sr. Alfonsina who on 10th June 2016, passed away at 5:45 p.m. in the Infirmary of Casa Betania, a few days before her 103rd birthday.

Sr. Alfonsina (Costantino Maria) was born in Centallo (Cuneo) on 16th June 1913.

On 20th December 1933, she entered our Congregation at Turin – Mother House, where she celebrated the various events of her formative journey:

on 10th August 1934 she made her Vestition

on 10th August 1936 she made her first Profession

on 10th August 1942 she consecrated herself forever to the Lord through her Perpetual Profession.

Sr. Alfonsina, the eldest of three sisters, the second of which would become a Sister of St. Ann with the name Sr. Delia, was the oldest Sister of the Congregation and on 16th June, would have celebrated her 103rd birthday and in the month of August, her 80th Religious Profession.

Sr. Luigina Turletti of the Community of Casa Betania, who has known Sr. Alfonsina as a young Sister, said of her: *I had the joy of knowing personally the unforgettable dearest, Sr. Alfonsina in the Orphanage of Fossano. When I entered the boarding, she was already a Novice. Many times she used to come during the summer to spend about 15 days with her sisters Cristina (Sr. Delia) and Nella. Sr. Alfonsina was a wonderful Sister; with us orphans, she was very kind, friendly and understanding. She used to accompany us for long walks and often she entertained us, telling us her beautiful experiences. She taught us how to sing and she herself sang with enthusiasm. Today, I still remember the last song she taught us, I can never forget it".*

In 1936 our dear Sister was sent to Turin - Via Massena as Boarding Mistress, where, being in contact with the youth, she revealed her gifts as an educator in the formation of the young girls entrusted to her.

In 1940 obedience called her to Acireale, with the same task, and in 1946 she was transferred to Vetulonia as Superior, for two 6-year terms. In this house, where she remained for more than twenty years, she continued to carry out the service entrusted to her as a young Sister.

In 1969, she received again the mandate as Superior of Gavorrano, and in 1975 was transferred to Rome - Viale Marconi as portress. Sr. Renata remembers her thus: *"I was a Novice when I came to know Sr. Alfonsina in Viale Marconi. I was immediately struck by her delicateness, discretion and punctuality in carrying out her service. Her way of welcoming persons instilled peace and serenity; she was gentle and kind in her dealings. She was always loving towards me and whenever I stopped by to exchange a few words with her, she never failed to recommend to pray for priests, a task she had entrusted to me which I still do*

today. Years later, I met her again in Via Massena, my first field of apostolate in the school, where she was also carrying out her service as portress and had lost nothing of what I had seen in her many years before. When a person dies, he or she leaves a void, he or she is missed, but I, instead, now feel enriched because Sr. Alfonsina is present in my life as she had always been. Her faith made her strong in any situation and made her capable of giving strength and courage to those who turned to her”.

In 1981, she was sent to the former Northern Province of Italy (IS), in Turin - Via Massena again as portress and in 2001, by then, elderly and sick, she was transferred to the Mother House. Here, she lived the last years of her long life and from her bed where she was forced to remain for many years, she continued to give her beautiful life witness lived in silence, with the serenity that had always distinguished her.

Lately, her health began getting worse. The Sister-Nurses noting her worsening condition, took turns to assist her constantly. Thus, after two days of agony, while the Sisters of the Community were praying the Rosary around her bed, Sr. Alfonsina passed away peacefully.

Sr. Shiney, wrote thus about Sr. Alfonsina:

“At first, assisting Sr. Alfonsina who was so quiet, I wondered whether she would be able to speak. Instead, being with her I began to understand her and I had the joy to listen to her words, a few yet full of affection. I experienced the depth of her inner life in her silence, in her manner of receiving Holy Communion, in her being in bed for many years without complaint. Her eyes reflected her life of prayer, as we had the chance to see when, last year, we took her to the chapel in a wheelchair on her birthday. On that occasion, notwithstanding her deformed body due to arthritis and advanced age, she was attentive during the whole celebration”.

On 13th June, in the Chapel of the Mother House the funeral Mass was celebrated, presided over by Fr. Andrea Pacini, Parish Priest of St. Augustine Parish, who spoke about death as an experience which finds meaning only in the death and resurrection of Jesus, of which the Consecrated life is an attentive waiting. At the funeral Mass were present the Sisters of the Community of the Mother House, some Sisters of the nearby Communities, the nieces and a cousin of Sr. Alfonsina who came from Centallo, all united by their great love for their aunt whom they visited often.

At the end of the celebration, Sr. Francarita, saying goodbye to Sr. Alfonsina, pointed out:

“your serenity, your capacity to suffer in silence, a silence filled with gratitude and affection, have always moved me and made me understand that Consecrated life is lived this way. It is not easy to forget you nor to imitate you, but this is the path which you have trod, which enlightens us and makes us live in communion with everyone, orienting our journey toward the Father’s house. Thank you for what you have been for us”.

After the Holy Mass, her mortal remains were interred in the Monumental Cemetery of Turin.

Dearest Sisters, let us thank the Most Holy Trinity for the gift of Sr. Alfonsina’s long and beautiful life, for the gift of this dear Sister to our Congregation and we thank our Sister Nurses for their fraternal dedication with which they have cared for her.

I greet everyone fraternally,


Sr. Gabriella Profita, Provincial Superior